



Reform is in our Future

Dear Friend,

Reform is a word I've spoken about often in my newsletters. The need to reform our regulatory environment, tax structure and budgeting process has been a consistent theme throughout my term as a state senator. In fact, reform has been my top priority.

It should come as no surprise then that when Governor Rick Snyder presented his budget proposal to the Legislature, I was delighted to hear him emphasize the need for real reforms to address the structural crisis we face in Michigan.

The governor presented a balance sheet that tackles the breadth and scope of our structural deficit. He looked at the complete picture, including future unfunded liabilities within the state's pension systems, and laid out a plan that included long-term solutions to get our state back on track. Some of his ideas include:

- Replace the Michigan Business Tax (MBT) with a flat 6 percent Corporate Income Tax. He also supported broadening the base of the income tax to include all pensions and reducing the rate from 4.35 percent to 4.25 percent;
- Eliminate all forms of targeted tax credits;
- Limit certain state assistance programs to a lifetime total of 48 months, with exemptions for incapacity and hardship; and
- Negotiate state employee concessions that would total \$180 million.

The governor's entire proposal can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

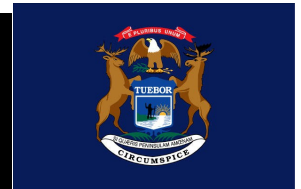
Please know that I am not endorsing or opposing any of the governor's suggestions at this point in time. These reforms will have long-lasting impacts on the state and the citizenry and we need to carefully examine and understand these reforms prior to moving forward.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance, I have the unique challenge of re-evaluating the means in which we procure revenue and then appropriate those funds to areas and programs that will be most effective to the citizens of Michigan. I do not take this task lightly.

We have an enormous opportunity to improve the way Michigan does business. I am committed to working with the governor and my fellow legislators to tackle the state's budget deficit, regulatory environment and tax structure. There is no doubt that reform is in our future. As always, I will keep you updated on the progress of our work in upcoming newsletters.

Sincerely,


John Pappageorge



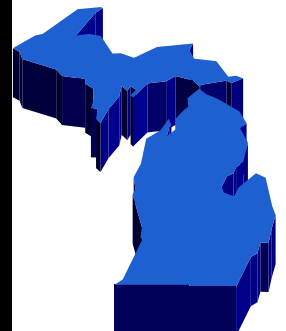
Inside this issue:

Eight Tips to Appeal Your Property Taxes 2

Senator's New Legislation 3

March is Reading Month 3

Upcoming Office Hours 4



Effectively Appeal Your Property Tax Assessment

Homeowners should take a good look at their property tax assessment. Just as it is important to make sure your credit report is right, it is a good idea to make sure your assessment is accurate. As a start, you should check for errors on your appraisal card. Look over your home for structural damage or problems not associated with general aging that could affect the value of the property.

It is also smart to research comparable properties in your area. If you believe your tax assessment is in error, you can appeal to your local Board of Review, and if necessary, the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

Here are Eight Steps to Effectively Appeal Your Property Tax Assessment:

STEP 1: You may appeal your taxable value and SEV to the March Board of Review. Go to your local assessor's office and obtain a copy of your appraisal card for your property or visit their website for your assessment information. Ask the assessing department to explain the document. You can also obtain the appraisals of similar properties which recently sold in the area. Carefully check the appraisal card for errors.

STEP 2: If your tentative taxable value increased by more than 1.7% above your 2010 taxable value and you did not improve your home with additions, then your taxable value may exceed the statutorily mandated assessment cap. Call your assessor and inquire as to why your taxable value increased by more than the rate of inflation. Remember, annual growth in taxable value is capped at the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is less, until the property transfers. SEV is not capped but must reflect 50% of your property's true cash value. Taxable value and SEV may be appealed to the Board of Review.

STEP 3: Frequently, many homes have problems that are not associated with general aging. Examples can be cracked foundations, wall construction problems, or poor masonry work. The impact of these problems on the value of the home should be specifically addressed. It is necessary to perform a complete inside inspection of your home. Written repair estimates and

photographs of structural damage are good evidence of problems that could affect property value.

STEP 4: Location is the single most important feature that determines the value of your home. If you live near a major highway, business, or industry, your home may be less desirable. Obtain copies of citizen complaints about unusual noises or neighborhood eyesores. Record factory, truck, or party noise. These characteristics may contribute to a deteriorating value on your home and you must be able to show this to the Board of Review.

STEP 5: Comparable property assessments are one of the most important tools for a property tax assessment appeal. If comparable properties are assessed lower than yours, you may argue that your property is over assessed. Make your comparable study by requesting the appraisal cards for similar homes. Check the assessed value, the state equalized value, taxable value, type of house, and zoning. You may wish to have your home professionally appraised. A professional appraisal is the best evidence against an improper assessment and the best proof of value.

STEP 6: One of the most common mistakes home buyers can make is failing to inform the assessor of personal property and other valuable items which were included in the sale. Personal property items often included in a home's sale price such as furniture, kitchen appliances, washer, dryer, etc., are exempt from assessment. If you do not inform your assessor in writing about these items, your assessment may erroneously include this value.

STEP 7: The last step in the process is to put all your information into letter form to present before your local Board of Review.

STEP 8: If you are not satisfied with the decision of your local Board of Review, you may want to continue your appeal. To do this, you must send a letter to the Michigan Tax Tribunal (P.O. Box 30232, Lansing, MI 48909) and file an appeal before July 31.

Income Tax Information

If you are looking for Michigan Taxpayer's Guides, I have dropped off several copies at local libraries. If you are not able to get to a library, you can call my office at 1-877-SEN-13TH (1-877-736-1384) and we will send one to you. You can also print a copy of the guide from my website, under the "Publications" icon.



In addition, you may wish to visit www.michigan.gov/taxes for additional information on income tax updates and printable forms. If you are not able to find a particular form, please contact my office for assistance. We have already sent out several forms to constituents.

New Legislation Introduced by Senator Pappageorge

Senate Bill (SB) 102

SB 102 would create a new specialty license plate deemed the "Gold Star Family" license plate.

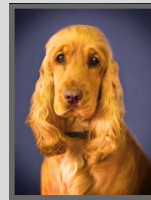
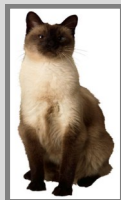
The bill would allow a spouse, parent, sibling or child of a member of the armed services who died during combat to qualify for this special plate. The license plate will be inscribed with a gold star and the words "Gold Star Family."

This legislation is modeled after 45 states that have some form of Gold Star Family or Fallen Warrior license plates to honor those families who lost a loved one in combat. It has been referred to as a "moving memorial" by family members who support such legislation.

Senate Bill (SB) 162

SB 162 would create a specialty fundraising license plate for the Michigan Humane Society. The money raised via the plate will go specifically to pet sterilization.

The Michigan Humane Society is already established in our communities and is the largest animal welfare organization in the state, taking in approximately 100,000 animals annually. They already sterilize nearly 20,000 animals annually, which includes a low-cost sterilization program for low income guardians.



Senate Resolution (SR) 15

SR 15 commemorates March 2011 as Ethnic and Cultural Heritage Month in the state of Michigan.

It is important to celebrate Michigan's culture as one being enriched by the many different cultures of those individuals who have chosen to come to Michigan, become citizens, and call this state their home. We should recognize that each individual brings with them a part of his or her own heritage which over time integrates into one common heritage, leading us to become a united people.

I would like to give a special thanks to the City of Royal Oak for having me at their City Commission meeting last week to kick-off March as Ethnic and Cultural Heritage Month.

March is Reading Month

You might wonder what Dr. Seuss and the Michigan economy could have in common. Well, it all comes together during March is Reading Month as children across the state and the country celebrate reading.

The event often kicks off with a birthday salute to Dr. Seuss, whose books introduced countless children to the joy of reading. The beloved author recognized that children who love to read, love to learn.

We know that success in school starts with reading. Yet, a recent report from the Education Trust shows that only 30 percent of Michigan fourth graders are proficient or advanced in reading on the national test.

As Michigan looks to rebound, we must make sure our students have the tools to achieve and succeed. After all, it is a well-educated workforce that drives economic

growth in the global economy. So learning to read - and reading well - is more important than ever.



While formal reading instruction occurs in school, there is much we can do outside of the classroom. As a child's first and most important teacher, parents have a special role in helping children learn. Educators suggest even very young children can benefit from these reading tips:

- ◆ Read to your child every day.
- ◆ Encourage your child to read to you.
- ◆ Help your child get a library card and use it often.
- ◆ Give a book as a gift for birthdays and special occasions.
- ◆ Keep books and newspapers in your home.
- ◆ READ! Let your child see how much you value reading.

February and March Office Hours

Saturday, February 26

9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Troy Community Center
3179 Livernois

Noon to 2:00 p.m.

Baldwin Public Library
300 W. Merrill St.

3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Royal Oak Public Library
222.W. 11 Mile Road

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Questions? Comments?

If you have any questions or comments regarding information in this newsletter, or wish to be removed from or added to the mailing list, please contact my office at the following information:

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